

Chapter 4

Marketing communications and electronic media

Introduction

This chapter considers a number of marketing theories and concepts and seeks to place them within the museum context. It does so with a view to building a picture of the developments in marketing that have resulted in the role that electronic media now have in the museum sector. It first considers the growing move for organisations to take an integrated approach to marketing and the difficulties inherent in defining the approach known as Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), given the disagreement seen in the academic literature as to its validity. This first section, however, sets out the definition used in this thesis, and introduces the concept of branding as it relates to integrating marketing strategies.

The next section discusses marketing communications and branding in the museum context. It sets out the discussion in line with the three areas that are apparent in the definition of integrated marketing communication used here: communicating to museums' publics; integrating communication tools in the museum sector; and brand and branding museums. The subsequent section examines electronic marketing strategies and how these relate to museums, clarifying the definition of electronic marketing used here, and discussing the public's use of the Internet.

The concluding section of this chapter uses the preceding sections as a basis for discussing the topic of museums and electronic media. It builds on the discussion of integrated marketing and electronic marketing and seeks to evaluate current museum Internet activities by looking at the literature on current museum practice and museums' use of electronic media for marketing, and how that might fit into an overall marketing strategy.

An integrated approach to marketing communications

The position taken in this thesis is that marketing has become a standard facet of museum management (Rentschler, 2004). Within marketing itself, taking an integrated approach to communications has been a growing trend. Later sections will look at the extent to which museums utilise an integrated approach to communicate with their multiple publics as part of an overall marketing strategy. However, in this section, the discussion will centre around the concept of IMC, first outlining its status within the academic community, and then seeking to establish a definition within which the findings may be framed.

The status of IMC

There is a continuing debate on the status of IMC in the academic arena. The debate centres around IMC's standing as an academic theory. Cornelissen and Lock's (2000) position is that IMC lacks academic rigor, and is nothing more than a "management fashion" supported by "rhetorical presentation" (2000: 11). They also consider IMC to have little actual significance to marketing and advertising practice, to be without an agreed definition (a point that will be expanded upon below) and of only a transient influence (Kitchen, 2005). In an article rebutting their argument, Schultz and Kitchen (2000) state that IMC is an emerging paradigm whose progression as a concept and discipline has been entirely appropriate. Cornelissen and Lock were also criticised by Schultz and Kitchen for their selective and narrow use of citations mainly derived from the public relations discipline, which has a historical distrust of marketing's pre-eminence in the corporate setting.

While the debate continues to be acknowledged, recent literature tends to be more positive and aimed at developing the concept of IMC (see, for instance: Kitchen, Brignell, Li & Jones, 2004; Kliatchko, 2005; Reid, 2003). As has been noted by Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan and McDonald (2005), the vigorous debate surrounding IMC can be seen as indicative of it being "on the right path in terms of attracting and generating an informed, intellectual discourse" (2005: 71). In addition, Gould (2004) has observed that IMC can simultaneously have:

an impact... in terms of both discursive and analytic approaches... [and provide] a robust perspective for framing and making prescriptive interventions in the managerial and consumer-communications involved (2004: 67).

Consequently, IMC can have academic validity for the study of marketing behaviour and strategies, and can also be a useful tool for organisations to use to build brand equity—a point that will be discussed in more detail below—and competitive advantage (Gould, 2004). Certainly, it has received widespread practitioner support, with studies from the 1990s to the present showing that industry continues to see the benefits and value of an integrated approach to marketing communications (Kliatchko, 2005). For instance, Kitchen and Schultz (1999) conducted a multi-country study in the United States, United Kingdom, India, Australia and New Zealand that sought to consider the acceptance and development of IMC within advertising agencies. They found that integrated marketing communications is of significant importance to advertising agencies, as indicated by the amount of time and resources devoted to it, and that much of the impetus for integration comes from the client.

Similarly, there have been a number of academic studies conducted that provide support for the idea that IMC can be of significant benefit to an organisation (Carlson, Grove & Dorsch, 2003; Madhavaram et al., 2005; Naik & Raman, 2003; Reid, 2003). In a study into the role of synergy across multiple media Naik and Raman (2003) found that IMC was the basis for organisations being able to build the brand equity of their products and services. Madhavaram et al. (2005) contend that IMC plays a significant role in reinforcing the organisation's communication processes, which in turn assists in the formation of brand awareness and a positive brand image. Writing from the perspective that IMC is a paradigm for both business and research, Reid (2003) found that integration of marketing communications is positively related to organisational performance. Of particular significance to the museum sector is Carlson et al's (2003) study in the services marketing context. While it concentrated on integration of advertising at the tactical level, it did show that integrated marketing communications can potentially create synergies that assist in encouraging customer responses. For the purposes of this thesis, then, while IMC may not yet be a theory, with further research needed before a solid theoretical foundation is reached (Kliatchko, 2005), it is

in an advanced “pre-paradigm period of development” (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000: 17) and is therefore not merely a management fashion as claimed by Cornelissen and Lock (2000).

Despite the widespread (though qualified) support for IMC amongst academics and practitioners there is ambiguity surrounding its definition, with no consistent and mutual agreement in the literature on its meaning (Reid, Luxton & Mavondo, 2005). IMC’s status as “pre-paradigm” (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000: 17) does mean that it need not be bound by an accepted definition at this stage (Kitchen, 2005). However, academic writers have agreed that there is value in developing a formal definition for IMC (Kitchen et al., 2004). With this in mind, the next section will review definitions of IMC and outline the view of IMC used in this thesis.

Developing a definition of IMC

Definitions of IMC commonly emphasise a strategic¹ approach to the planning of marketing and promotion programs, as well as the coordination of the various communication tools (Gould, 2004). Using an integrated approach, a firm’s marketing and promotional activities will be aimed at projecting a consistent and unified image to the target market. One of the first definitions of IMC, developed by the American Association of Advertising Agencies and researchers at Northwestern University (led by Don E. Schultz), highlighted this strategic integration:

A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines (for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations) and combines these

¹ It is worth noting that an integrated approach to marketing can operate at both the tactical level—relating to the planning and implementation of individual campaigns—and the strategic—relating to brand positioning strategy in an holistic manner (Reid, Luxton & Mavondo, 2005: 14). In a sense this reflects Gould’s (2004) view that IMC is both a process and a concept.

disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact (Schultz, 1993: 17).

Though not universally endorsed, this is the definition that appears to have been the most widely used by practitioners and academics, and is the one frequently cited in textbooks² (Kliatchko, 2005). It does have an innate usefulness as it links to one of the societal changes that was the impetus for the development of the IMC concept. As noted above, IMC partly came about as a response to the move away from a reliance on mass media (Kitchen et al., 2004). Consequently, a key aspect of IMC is that, rather than relying primarily upon traditional mass media advertising, it involves coordination of the various promotional tools available, *along with* the other available marketing activities that can communicate with a firm's customers. Significantly, this reflects the view that IMC is primarily about communication, albeit strategic.

One criticism that can be levelled at the Northwestern University definition of IMC is that it did not refer to any other public than the consumer. Such a definition is not readily applicable to the museum sector because, as has been demonstrated in Chapter 3, museums have a complex web of publics to which they need to market. Duncan and Moriarty (1994: cited in Duncan & Caywood, 1996) proposed a definition that stressed the building of relationships with all of an organisation's stakeholders, and moved IMC away from attempting an attitudinal change to eliciting a behavioural response (Kliatchko, 2005). They stated that IMC is:

the process of strategically controlling or influencing all messages and encouraging purposeful dialogue to create and nourish profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders (cited in Duncan & Caywood, 1996: 18).

Duncan and Caywood retained the ideas of 'communication' and 'strategy' seen in other definitions of IMC. Further, as well as expanding the concept of audience they also placed emphasis on long-term effects, such as building brand loyalty and maintaining relationships (Duncan & Caywood, 1996). Kliatchko (2005) has criticised

² See for example: Belch & Belch (2007); Clow & Baack (2004); Ferrell & Hartline (2008); Shimp (2007).

the definition because it fails to mention communication channels as such, referring only to 'dialogue'.

Duncan and Caywood's (1996) reference to process is at the heart of a view of IMC proposed by Schultz and Schultz (1998). In their opinion there has been a shift in focus from marketing communication operations and tactics to considering IMC as a business process (Kliatchko, 2005). Schultz and Schultz (1998) consider IMC to be:

a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences (1998: 18).

Their view is that a focus on business process will lead to closed-loop systems by which "all communication activities can be planned, implemented and evaluated" (Schultz & Schultz, 1998: 18).

One of the significant facets of the Schultz and Schultz definition is that it provides an expanded notion of brand communication (Kliatchko, 2005). In this respect it builds on Duncan and Caywood's (1996) definition noted above. That is, it notes the role of IMC in the process of building and maintaining brand image and equity by talking of brand communication programs. IMC is now recognised as a method that can be used by management to "reinforce the brand proposition" (Fill, 2005). The literature relating to branding, and branding in the museum context, will be reviewed below. In brief here, brand refers to a combination of factors relating to a good or a service, such as its name, logo and symbols, its design and packaging, as well its performance (Keller, 2003). Branding also encompasses the associations that come to mind when consumers think about a brand and all instances of contact that customers may have with a brand. The latter factor is significant for services such as museums, where it is particularly crucial for staff to deliver a consistent brand image (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003).

Brand equity is perhaps more problematic. Firstly, brand equity has tended to be defined in a number of different ways for various purposes (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003).

Aaker's (1991) definition, though perhaps simplistic today, is oft-quoted and still a sound starting point. He states that brand equity is:

a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers (1991: 15).

The essence of brand equity is that it represents value to both the organisation and to its customer (Keller, 2003). The following comment from Keller illustrates how brand equity operates from the customer perspective:

positive consumer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is aware of the brand and holds some strong, favourable, and unique brand associations in memory (Keller, 1996: 106).

That brand equity has a value raises the second issue, that of measurement. It has been recognised that establishing a valid brand equity measurement system is a complex, though invaluable task (Aaker, 1996). Nonetheless, strategies to build brand equity are now mainstream in both for profit and not for profit organisations.

The link between IMC and brand equity is based on the premise that "effective communication enables the formation of brand awareness and a positive brand image" (Madhavaram et al., 2005: 70). A positive brand image can significantly enhance brand equity (Faircloth, Capella & Alford, 2001). Clearly, Kitchen et al. (2004) are correct when they state that including brand reinforcement as a role for IMC indicates that the concept has now become associated with management *and* brands, and not just communication processes.

Overall, for the purposes of this thesis, the strengths of the Schultz and Schultz (1998) definition are, firstly, that it reinforces the importance of using integrated communication across a range of communication tools found in other definitions while stressing they operate as part of a strategic business process. Secondly, it places communication in the context of reinforcing brand identity and image. Finally, it clearly recognises the significant role that multiple (internal and external) publics play, and the

importance of building relationships with each within an integrated strategy. Consequently, the definition provides the most useful framework for an analysis of museum marketing practice. The next section will look at the question of museums using IMC and branding in their marketing strategies within the framework of these three issues.

Marketing communication and branding in the museum context

Though the issue of using an integrated approach to museum marketing is not specifically addressed in the literature, there have been a number of well known contributions to the general topic of museum marketing (Kotler & Kotler, 1998; McLean, 1997). A more recent contribution by Rentschler and Hede (2007) provides a wide range of perspectives on museum marketing in a global context. In addition, there are contributions to the literature that view museum marketing through a services marketing lens. The museum experience is a service encounter, and as Carlson et al. (2003) have noted, “the potential contribution of integrated marketing communications to services marketers is indeed great” (2003: 71). McLean (1994) was one of the first researchers to apply the then still emerging services marketing theories to the museum sector; later Rentschler and Gilmore (2002) considered those aspects of service delivery that might be applicable to museums. In a similar vein McLean (1998) looked at the usefulness of corporate identity theories in the museum sector. She considered the current practice of corporate identity management in museums, concluding that theories derived from the for profit sector do not adequately fit the not for profit museum. Despite the lack of direct academic literature, the three aspects of the framework drawn from Schultz and Schultz (1998) noted above illustrate that there are sound strategic reasons for museums to adopt an integrated approach to their marketing. The first of these to be addressed is the need for museums to consider all their publics when planning marketing strategies.

Communicating to museums' publics

As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, in the main museums have moved from the collection focus to a concentration on their visitors—they have become audience driven. The utility of an integrated approach in this instance, then, is that:

...to be audience-focused means IMC programmes are directed at the *multiple markets* with which an organisation interacts. An audience-focused organisation deals with its various publics or stakeholders at any given time in the course of performing the different aspects of its business operations (Kliatchko, 2005: 26; emphasis in the original).

Museums now understand that 'audience' does not mean just the general public—it is widely recognised in the museum sector that there are various 'publics', stakeholders that museums need to satisfy, and consequently market to (Lehman, 2006).

As was noted in Chapter 3, front of house staff, curatorial staff, researchers, board members, volunteers and other groups on the 'inside' need to be considered as publics amongst a range of other competing publics in the modern museum. While there is still some way to go before the interconnectedness of museum publics is fully understood (Lehman, 2006), museums need to consider marketing strategies that take account of these realities in the twenty-first century environment. Internal publics are, therefore, a legitimate target for marketing communications in the sector. Schultz and Schultz (1998) have pointed out that:

Increasingly, organisations are beginning to recognize that one of the most powerful brand contacts and, historically, one of the most overlooked, is their own work force (1998: 21)

In a study of the UK museum system, Kawashima (1997) noted that museums also relied on multiple external publics such as government and funders generally for their survival, but these had been ignored in the past, and called for more communication across levels in the sector. There is a clear need, then, for museums to market to the various publics with which they are required to engage, both internal and external. As a complication, each of these audiences requires a different marketing strategy (Rentschler, 2007). In addition, as set out in Chapter 3, there are considerable

differences between museums as not for profit organisations and profit making businesses in relation to vision and aims that necessitates a different approach to marketing overall. Nonetheless, it is considered here that there does still need to be integration across the marketing strategies applied to a museum's stakeholder groups, for the same reasons as found in the for profit sector. The issue of integrating marketing tools is considered in the next section.

Integrating communication tools in the museum sector

In one of the earliest definitions of IMC noted earlier in this Chapter it was pointed out that there were a variety of "communication disciplines" (Schultz, 1993: 17) that could be used within marketing communications: general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations were given as examples. The development of IMC, though, reflects a recognition by marketing academics and practitioners that there has been a fundamental change in the environment in which business operates (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). This is principally the case in relation to changes in the marketplace, media and communications and to consumers (Kliatchko, 2005). For instance, media fragmentation and the increasing segmentation of the consumer market is considered as part of the impetus for the noticeable shift of marketing budgets away from mass media advertising to other forms of promotion (Kitchen et al., 2004). As well as this change in the relative significance of certain tools there has also been the addition of tools available to the marketer.

Today, the commonly agreed marketing communication tools are advertising, direct marketing, interactive/Internet marketing, sales promotion, public relations, and personal selling (Belch & Belch, 2007; Clow & Baack, 2004; Shimp, 2007), with each of these tools widely used in the profit making business sector. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis so far, there are various forces that compel museums to act in a similar manner to the business sector. As a consequence, museums now also widely use the same marketing communication tools: in the museum context, Kotler and Kotler (1998) include firstly image and brand building, then the more common tools of advertising, direct marketing; sales promotion; public relations; and personal selling when discussing the topic of communication and promoting the

museum. There are two points upon which this opinion could be criticised. The first is that it is viewed here that brand building activities are not simply an operational issue as implied by Kotler and Kotler (1998), but represent a more strategic role for websites. This point will be expanded on below. The second point is that Kotler and Kotler (1998) do not discuss interactive/Internet marketing under communication and promotion, but rather distribution. This reflects a narrow, and now outdated, view of how electronic tools can be incorporated in business strategy.

In fact, the most significant development within marketing communication is the 'addition' of interactive and electronic media. Overall, digital technology has played a significant role in changing the environment in which marketing must operate (Urban, 2003). For example, retailers and wholesale distribution chains are now using technologies to better track inventory and monitor consumer buying patterns (Hopping, 2000). Similarly, the increasing sophistication of database software has allowed firms to better target consumers through a variety of direct marketing strategies such as telemarketing and direct mail. There are also ubiquitous devices such as the mobile phone that are facilitating new ways of reaching and interacting with consumers (Moffett et al., 2002). However, while these technologies are important drivers of current marketing strategies, the technology that is now considered an essential part of any overall business strategy is the Internet (Adam et al., 2002). As was noted in Chapter 1, the Internet has changed the way humans behave, how they interact, how they communicate and how they gather information (Lagrosen, 2003). Websites are now widely seen as part of a brand building program (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Consequently, marketing has had to make adjustments for the new medium, changing the nature of how organisations communicate and interact with their consumers (Van Doren, Fechner & Green-Adelsberger, 2000).

As has been noted, one of the primary reasons to use an integrated approach to marketing is to reinforce the effective communication processes that are central to the formation of brand awareness and a positive brand image (Madhavaram et al., 2005). The next section addresses the topic of brands in general, and poses the question of

whether museums, as not for profit cultural organisations, are in a position to establish themselves as brands in the market place.

Branding and branding museums

There have been considerable research undertaken on branding in consumer goods as well as a number of textbooks both aimed at practitioners and the academic market (see, for example: Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Faircloth et al., 2001; Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Jevons, 2005; Keller, 2003; McEnally & de Chernatony, 1999; Wheeler, 2006). In order to place the concept of museum branding, and the later analysis of the strategies of the case museums, in a theoretical context, it is useful briefly to outline the concepts as commonly understood. As was noted above, brand refers to a combination of factors relating to a good or a service, such as its name, logo and symbols, its design and packaging, as well its performance (Keller, 2003) and includes the associations that come to mind when consumers recall a brand. Strategies to build brand equity involve the totality of the concept of branding, encompassing brand identity and brand image.

Brand identity involves those facets of the brand that represent the brand visually and verbally (Wheeler, 2006). Importantly, these facets are constructions of the organisation concerned. Identity is a message ‘sent’ by the organisation to the consumer, to be decoded (Nandan, 2005). Clearly this implies that problems can arise in the communication process—the consumer may well not receive the message intended by the organisation. Nonetheless, organisations use brand identity to establish an intended brand image.

Brand image is, then, concerned with the perceptions of the brand in the minds of the consumer (Keller, 2003). Following Nandan’s (2005) reference to the communication process above, the brand image is the message as decoded by the consumer. Brand image includes the related concepts of brand awareness and brand preference, both of which are what Rossiter and Bellman (2005) call “universal campaign communication objectives” (2005: 107), in that raising brand awareness and increasing brand preference should be the objective of all marketing communication campaigns. Organisations can

seek to achieve these objectives by using various marketing communication devices or tools, such as advertising or public relations, in both the offline and online environments. They do so because, as was cited previously, a positive brand image can significantly enhance brand equity (Faircloth et al., 2001), which represents value to *both* the organisation and its customer (Keller, 2003).

In the museum sector, where measuring equity in a financial sense is problematic, the ‘value’ of a brand can affect the consumption of the ‘product’. In a paper examining how exposure to a museum’s brand affected the meaning of an artwork Cirrincione and Pace (2005) noted that brand management has a significant role to play in museums. Their study found that:

The museum brand does not operate only as an aid to select the museum visit, but it affects at a deeper level, by influencing the perceptions of the artwork itself (Cirrincione & Pace, 2005: 11).

The fact that a firm’s brand affects perceptions of their product by consumers is well recognised in the for profit sector (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003), but until recently it has not been a consideration within cultural institutions such as museums and art galleries.

Recent work by Hede (2007) and Scott (2007) has provided an overview of branding for the museum sector and surveyed how museums could and do use the concept. However, in what represented one of the first attempts at applying the theories of brand to the museum sector³, Caldwell (2000) proposed a set of criteria upon which an assessment of the strength of a museum brand can be made. Drawing on work by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (2003), Caldwell’s criteria are customer satisfaction on the part of the museum visitor, brand name awareness of the museum, perceived quality of the museum experience, brand name associations and identity, and other proprietary brand assets. Firstly, Caldwell notes the important role surveys can have when measuring customer satisfaction for museum visitors. Since the 1960s visitor surveys have been an increasingly significant tool in providing data for policy and strategy making within the

³ There had been the occasional article in professional and practitioner magazines. See, for example: Finke, 1996.

museum sector (Casey & Wehner, 2001). While this may indicate a shift to a “people-centered” view of museum management (Neilson, 2003: 23), it does not necessarily mean a marketing focus. However, as a tool to measure one facet of “the strength of a brand”, as Caldwell (2000: 34) described it, it is useful.

Concerning the dimension “brand name awareness of the museum”, Caldwell (2000: 32) suggests that measuring name recall and retention could be a useful means by which benchmark levels could be set for museums. Brand awareness in relation to for profit organisations has long been considered a crucial consideration in brand strategy (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Aaker (1991) has stated that brand awareness is one of the key components of brand’s consumer-based equity and it reflects the “salience of the brand” (1991: 114) in the customer’s mind. Awareness can have a number of levels, for example, recognition, recall and top-of-mind (Aaker, 1991). Top-of-mind, one of the first brand awareness measures to receive attention from researchers, is where a brand is the first recalled in response to the product category (Romaniuk, Sharp, Paech & Driesener, 2004). However, as Caldwell (2000) notes, for a museum to be considered as a choice within a product range, it first must be recognised by the consumer as such. If the museum is competing with other museums that may be the case. But if the museum is competing with other ‘entertainments’, the challenge for museums is far greater.

The same could be said of Caldwell’s (2000: 32) next dimension, the “perceived quality of the museum experience”. Similar to brand awareness, the perception of quality can be raised by advertising. However, the perception of quality involves the consumer making a comparative assessment with other products in the category (Aaker, 1996: 109). This is something that may take some time to develop (Caldwell, 2000). It also involves a number of other facets due to it being a ‘service’ product. The perception of service quality depends on a range of factors that vary in significance depending on how directly they relate to the actual service experience (Keller, 2003). That a visit to a museum is now considered a ‘service encounter’ is indicative of the development of a customer focus that has been noted throughout this thesis. While the collection is still an important facet of a quality museum experience (Scott, 2007), there is a strong emphasis now on visitor needs and customer satisfaction (Rentschler & Gilmore, 2002).

The comparative nature of the perceived quality of the museum experience links to Caldwell's fourth dimension, "brand name associations and identity" (2000: 33). In a study of the Powerhouse Museum's brand audit and rebranding exercise Scott (2000) notes that positioning museums will be a matter of survival in the twenty first century. This is because, as she rightly observes, when compared to other leisure activities museums might not hold for the consumer the actual attributes of a leisure activity (Scott, 2000). That is, if museums are to compete with other leisure activities, and as has been shown in Chapter 2, they must, then they need to communicate the attributes associated with leisure to their target market. There is evidence that they have some way to go in this area. Caldwell and Coshall's (2002) study into the measurement of brand associations for museums and art galleries using repertory grid analysis found that:

visitors do not differentiate between them on the basis of anything but functional benefits... [and] the rich texture of brand associations which consumers develop with well-loved and popular brands has not progressed in the same way with museums (2002: 390).

As an example, visitors to the Tate Modern in London associated the museum with functional attributes such as 'exhibits art/paintings' and 'modern art', and not with concepts such as 'good day out', 'tourist attraction' or 'enjoyable' (Caldwell & Coshall, 2002). In a subsequent extension of their original study Caldwell and Coshall (2003) noted that when choosing a museum destination visitors place more importance on the museum being interesting, with a diverse range of exhibits, than they do on the museum being 'educational', a function widely accepted by the museum sector as a core activity (Kotler & Kotler, 1998).

Caldwell's (2000) previously noted criteria upon which an assessment of the strength of a museum brand might be made are drawn from the for profit world where either services or goods are an easily understood product. This does not lessen their utility here, rather it is further evidence that museums are now recognising that they must market themselves in the same way any organisation must. This is made even more clear when considering Caldwell's (2000: 33) final dimension, "other proprietary brand assets", which includes the location, the building, the collection and the human capital of the institution (eg, its expertise and its research output). Museums such as the British

Museum, the Louvre and the Guggenheim museums all make use of their building and location in their brand building strategies. For instance, the British Museum uses its building's façade as part of its logo. Frey (1998: 113) considers such institutions to be "superstar museums": commercialised, 'must-see' facilities which house famous works of art within architecturally-notable buildings. In terms of this last point, Yanow's (1998) research on the role of museum buildings as organisational spaces is relevant. Her work considers three well-known museums in the United States and interprets how the spatial form of those museums communicates meanings to visitors. The building has also been shown to be a significant facet of the brand for corporate museums (Lehman & Byrom, 2006). Generally, architecture is an important part of any organisation's visual identity (van den Bosch, Elving & de Jong, 2006).

Similarly, the individuality of an institution's collection is now a vital part of its brand strategies. Though the relative place of the collection within museums has shifted—as has been noted, collecting for the sake of collecting has been replaced with a focus on the customer—collections and exhibits are still the core product offerings for museums, and represent the point of differentiation entertainment competitors cannot provide (Kotler & Kotler, 1998). One example of the collection being linked to the brand is the Tate Modern, with the nature of its collection being incorporated into its name. As Phillips and O'Reilly (2007) have pointed out, the Tate Modern was "an early convert to the idea of the 'museum as brand'" (2007: 188). Such behaviour is not widespread in the museum sector, however, with considerable variation amongst museums as to the extent they include the nature of their collection in their marketing strategies. This may be problematic for museums. For instance, some Smithsonian Institution visitors have described that museum's brand characteristics in terms of its mission, that is, it is 'about America' or 'the world', rather than its offerings (Smithsonian Institution, 2002b).

The concepts of integrating marketing communication and branding have been shown to have applicability in the field of museum management. While there are differences between museums, as not for profit organisations, and profit making businesses that necessitate changes in strategy, the overall impression is that integrating strategies are being used in practice. It does appear that, just as marketing has taken some time to

establish itself as a legitimate concern for museums, the concept of branding is only embryonic in the sector. A small number of large iconic museums such as the British Museum, the Guggenheim, the Smithsonian, and the Louvre do possess national and international associations in the minds of the consumer (Caldwell, 2000), which is something that is a hallmark of a brand in the sense seen with traditional consumer goods. Branding in that sense is perhaps less evident in the broader museum sector. In the case of the Australian state museums, for instance, it is perhaps debatable if they currently manage their brands to the same extent as firms in the for profit sector do. However, that is a situation that appears to be changing, with branding now a concept with increasing support within museum management (Scott, 2007).

Electronic marketing

It is considered here that the rise of electronic marketing is one of the results of the societal changes that have seen marketing itself become a concern for organisations. That is, one of the responses from businesses to the need to be more in touch with their customer—who now expect such behaviour from them—has been to embrace the digital world. This is also true for the museum sector, where museum visitors are now seeking to engage with museums via electronic media (Bartak, 2007). It was suggested, both in Chapter 1 and above, that the Internet, and digital technologies in general, have been one of the main change agents in business in recent years, and therefore in marketing practice. Certainly, within the overall marketing discipline electronic marketing now has an established role (Brodie, Winklhofer, Coviello, & Johnstone, 2007; Harridge-March, 2004; O'Connor, Galvin & Evans, 2004), with expenditure on electronic marketing growing swiftly in many of the developed markets (Barwise & Farley, 2005). Research in the area, though, has been quite recent. One study revealed that 60% of the research into Internet marketing had occurred in the last 3 years (Schibrowsky, Peltier, & Nill, 2007). (The literature as it relates to museums will be discussed below.)

One of the issues discussed in the literature is defining the concept of electronic marketing (Ngai, 2003), with a number of difficulties evident. With the aim of clarifying the definition used in this research, these will be presented in the next section. A subsequent section will look at the public's use of the Internet, in order to establish the significance of electronic media to the Australian state museums, and therefore the role that electronic marketing might need to play within any overall marketing strategies.

Defining electronic marketing

As stated, one of the main issues in relation to the concept of electronic marketing is establishing a definition. Where digital channels fit into an integrated marketing approach was set out in a previous section. Where electronic marketing fits into marketing generally, and to business strategy, is a different matter. It is worthwhile starting here with some basic definitions in order to place this study in the context of what is a nebulous academic area. Firstly, very broadly, electronic business refers to the use of the Internet to conduct business activities. This may be such uses as buyer-seller intranets or the use of industry-specific portals. In comparison, electronic commerce generally refers to the use of the Internet for buying and selling products and services. Museums, like other organisations, offering online shopping is an example.

Following from this, electronic marketing could then be simply described as the use of the Internet to conduct marketing activities. However, there are two problems with this definition. One point of confusion comes with the fact that, if viewed from an integrated marketing perspective, electronic business and electronic commerce both have marketing aspects, as do their offline equivalents. The relevant example here is the extent to which museum shops, both online and physical as it happens, are simultaneously revenue raising and brand building devices. Using a website's design and functionality to communicate brand identity is particularly important when integrating messages across channels (Rowley, 2004). The second confusion relates to the terms 'electronic' and 'Internet'. Some textbooks noted previously use the term Internet (Chaffey et al., 2006; Mohammed et al., 2004) and others use the term electronic (O'Connor et al., 2004; Strauss et al., 2006), with a tendency to use the terms

interchangeably. In an attempt to provide a classification scheme for Internet research Ngai (2003) defined Internet marketing as:

The process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products, and services that satisfy the goals of both buyers and sellers (2003; 24).

In comparison Ngai (2003) considered electronic marketing as: “the transfer of goods or services from seller to buyer that involves one or more electronic methods or media” (2003: 24). Belch and Belch (2007) suggest that ‘internet/interactive marketing’ refers to a form of marketing communication through interactive media which allows for a two-way flow of information whereby users can participate in and modify the content of the information they receive in real time.

All these definitions contain the idea of an exchange, central to the marketing concept. Ngai’s (2003) definition of electronic marketing appears, though, to relegate it to be an off-shoot of the Internet research. In contrast, it is considered here that the term Internet does not cover channels such as mobile telephones, with SMS and WAP being increasingly popular. It also does not include wireless, podcasts, or the video equivalent ‘vodcast’. These are ‘electronic’ but not necessarily connected to the Internet. Belch and Belch’s (2007) definition covers these channels, but does so by adding the word ‘interactive’. For this reason this thesis adopts the descriptor ‘electronic marketing’. It is not only less confusing, but appears more accurate.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the interactivity of the Internet, as well as the idea that there is now a range of different media available, though the Australian state museums considered here may not use them. It is also important to note that, by their reference to users participating in, and modifying, the content of the message, Belch and Belch (2007) include the developments in relation to Web 2.0 in their consideration of electronic marketing. Though not yet appearing in the marketing literature, Web 2.0 is a phenomenon that is influencing current electronic marketing practice, and the marketing strategies of for profit organisations. As Murugesan (2007: 34) describes it, Web 2.0 is “a collection of technologies, business strategies and social trends”, and represents the

second phase of the Web's evolution. The social networking websites Facebook, Flickr and YouTube are given as examples of how Web 2.0 has influenced website business. The phenomenon is broader than those examples, however, and includes the user-generated online encyclopedia Wikipedia. The common Web 2.0 technologies are as follows:

Blogs: essentially a website where people can enter their thoughts, comments and suggestions, usually in the style of a journal.

Wikis: a collaborative content management system that allows users to create or edit articles through a Web browser.

Really Simple Syndication (known as RSS): a collection of protocols that provide user-defined and syndicated 'feeds' from websites or blogs.

Mashups: the combining of complementary information and services from multiple services on the Web.

The emphasis is on collaborative, sharing, people-centric applications (Dearstyne, 2007) that, for the purposes of this thesis, represent strategic opportunities to build relationships with an organisation's publics. That is, the use of a website to deliver advertising messages in a tactical manner remains, but is being supplemented by the ability to use relationship and brand building applications and activities for strategic objectives. This is a change that has occurred over the past few years. In a longitudinal study into various firms' electronic marketing strategies, Sultan and Rohm (2004) found that:

Firms are now recognising the importance of the Internet with respect to media integration and branding efforts and objectives (2004: 13).

The interactivity of Web 2.0 also reflects the changes that have been seen in the general public. They are now more technically aware, and more demanding of service providers, and more inclined to direct their own online experiences. All organisations, museums included, must take account of this when formulating electronic marketing strategies.

Public use of the Internet

It is useful here to outline the level of use in Australia, and the types of use to which it is put. This will allow the role of the Internet as a marketing communication tool to be placed within the context of the wider community. As was noted in Chapter 1, use of the Internet in the home, at work and in educational institutions has significantly increased in recent years. Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (2005) figures show that in April 2005 67% of persons over the age of 14 in Australia used the Internet. This compares to 54% in September 2001. The types of activities these persons engaged in is also relevant. For example, e-mail is now clearly a common means of communication both for business and personally. Indeed, 84% of Australian Internet users use e-mail—the single largest online activity engaged in. This compares with 59% of users who search for product information (the second highest use), 44% who seek travel information, and 43% who research company information (Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2005).

While these figures indicate substantial online activity, the growth in Internet access has plateaued over the last few years. Overall, there was significant growth recorded during the period since 1998, with the percentage of Australian households with access to the Internet at 16% in 1998, rising to 56% in 2004–05. However, the increase between 2003 and 2004–05 was only 3% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005b). This is not to say that the Internet is declining in importance. It is perhaps more the case that usage is changing. One recent statistic that has a bearing on how organisations can utilise the Internet in the future relates to the take up of broadband technology. In June 2001 only 5% of home Internet users had access to broadband. This rose to 57% in June 2005 (Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2005).

In general, many now turn to the Internet as their primary source of information. In a report on how Australians use computers and the Internet, Lloyd and Bill (2004) state that:

Use of the Internet is rapidly becoming an increasingly common and critical part of commerce, education and social participation (2004: 1).

This fact is highly relevant in relation to how museums might communicate with their audience. There is a strong correlation between social and economic status and museum visiting, with museum visitors drawn predominately from the highly educated (McLean & O'Neill, 2007). This is the same key factor that influences computer and Internet use (Lloyd & Bill, 2004). Importantly, it has also been shown that there is a strong association between the education level of parents and the use of technology by their children (McLaren & Zappala, 2002). The result of the rise in the use of websites, and of the Internet generally, in the wider community, as well as in these key market segments, has considerable ramifications for museums. They must use the technology to reach audiences that now demand it (Vogel, 2006). Indeed such technology is part of the expectations of the average consumer in the twenty first century.

Importantly, technology provides museums with considerable opportunity. With more homes having access to broadband and able to receive high bandwidth-dependent content, such as video and audio, means that museums—who are 'rich' in content (Bartak, 2007)—are in a position to provide visitors to their websites with a 'value' online museum experience. In addition, technology can be used to provide access to collections (online exhibitions and information downloads), it can perhaps augment the museum's retail activities (online shopping), and it can be used for strategic audience development (Bartak, 2007). While all these uses can be seen as part of an integrated approach to marketing, it is this last use that is the most closely aligned with museums' using electronic media as part of an overall electronic marketing strategy. The extent to which they do is the subject of the next section.

Museums and electronic media

There are two main points to make in introducing the discussion of museums and electronic media here. The first is to note that the term 'electronic media' can cover a number of channels and technologies. As noted in Chapter 1, there are now a range of innovative marketing communication channels that can be used to target relevant market segments (Harmon et al., 1999). For example, it was noted above that mobile

phone technologies such as SMS and WAP are now being used by the for profit sectors in a number of innovative ways. However, there is no evidence that these are currently being employed by museums in Australia. As will be presented in Chapter 6, an assessment of the Australian state museums shows that apart from the occasional podcast and email newsletter, museums' primary electronic channel is their website. The term 'Internet' will be used when the researcher seeks to include e-mail as part of the technology, but otherwise the discussion relates to the museums' use of their website.

The second point to state is that this thesis is primarily concerned with traditional bricks and mortar museums' interactions with the electronic medium. It is not concerned with digital museums or virtual museums. There are examples of stand-alone museums that exist only digitally (Haber, 2000). The emphasis here, though, is on the use of electronic media by the Australian state museums as a marketing and management strategy. Importantly, this does not mean that online exhibits—the use of the Internet to present an exhibition—are not of concern. There is a significant use of the Internet by museums for what could be called curatorial objectives—digital access to collections (images and so on), as well as online exhibitions that are only available to visitors to the museum's website. While these may not be recognised by the museums themselves as marketing activities, they are considered here to be just that. Similarly, museums connecting to their various audiences through offering content downloads or retail experiences are using their website to develop a relationship with their online visitor, which is at the heart of audience development (Bartak, 2007) and is therefore of marketing use. Museums do not need to be necessarily strategically using their website as an explicit marketing communication tool for there still to be marketing value in their activities.

For instance, the use of the museum website to communicate their corporate vision and aims to their various publics is a marketing activity. The use of a website for service delivery—education content to schools, researchers, and the general public—is now commonplace in museums (Lagrosen, 2003). This too has a place in an integrated marketing strategy. Indeed, to communicate to the education market, a significant museum public and one of the main audiences museums have traditionally had

(McLean, 1997), is indicative of the use of the Web for marketing objectives. There is, though, an indication with all these activities that museums are not using their websites for strategic aims, and are not utilising any of the facets of Web 2.0 as yet. As Rentschler and Geursen (2003: 1727) describe the situation, museums websites tend to be “conceived from a product point of view, rather than a marketing one”. With a view to elaborating on just how museums use their websites from a marketing perspective, the next section will review the literature on museums’ Internet activities.

Museum Internet activities

There is an increasing body of literature on the role of the Internet on the museum sector. For example, Cameron (2001) comments on the technical aspects of museums making use of the Internet or the digital medium to allow access to museum catalogues. There are also articles on various aspects of museum websites, such as designing and evaluating user interfaces (Dyson & Moran, 2000; Hertzum, 1998), analysing the characteristics, patterns of behaviour and expectations of website visitors (Chadwick & Boverie, 1999; Kravchyna & Hastings, 2002; Sarraf, 1999), and the characteristics and uses of the online, or virtual, museum (Bernier, 2002; Schweibenz, 2004). Soren (2005) discussed a research study commissioned by the Canadian Heritage Information Network which sought to determine what factors define a ‘quality’ online museum experience.

The number of articles that discuss museum marketing in relation to the Internet or electronic media generally is, however, much smaller. This situation appears to be changing. Rentschler and Geursen (2003) researched the role of the museum website in audience development. Liew and Lee (2007) more recently studied the electronic marketing and communication activities of Asian museums. In another recent contribution Bartak (2007) provides a compelling argument in favour of museums’ involvement in the online environment. Lagrosen (2003) used Swedish museums as case studies for an analysis of online service and marketing delivery. Overall, though, there has not been to date the same level of interest in electronic marketing strategies in the sector as there is in the for profit sector. Even though the UNESCO sponsored journal *Museum International* had two special issues devoted to museums and the

internet—October/December 1999 (Vol 51, No 4) and January/March 2000 (Vol 52, No 1)— neither of them had an article on the use of the Internet to achieve marketing objectives (though the Introduction of Vol 51, No 4 (p 3) does mention the word ‘branding’).

What other literature there is tends to be in the form of a ‘how to’ manual for museum professionals inexperienced in the Internet, or a list of museums’ websites and their relative worth from a museum management point of view. Streten (1999) is an example of the former, and is more of a primer, covering such electronic marketing basics as the use of search engine registration, domain name allocation and the role of a webmaster. An early example of the latter is Anderson et al. (1997). This article, written by seven senior museum professionals, cites five example museums from each of the writers in relation to the question of what the qualities are of an outstanding museum website. Only one of the seven provided a criterion related to marketing. That criterion was where an outstanding museum website exhibited “brand identity/coherence”, in that its online presence was closely aligned with the physical (Anderson et al., 1997: 40). Predominately the writers were concerned with interactivity and other technical criteria. Significantly however, there was a recognition that connecting to its audience and conveying its mission and goals were evidence of a quality museum website. What was not recognised was that these could be ‘marketing’ criteria. As was mentioned above, this is perhaps related to what museums perceive as being a ‘marketing’ activity. This may be at the heart of issue. As was noted in Chapter 3, senior museum professionals do not necessarily have a clear understanding of what marketing is (Neilson, 2003) and, therefore, what electronic marketing is – if they did they might see that they in fact do use the Internet to market themselves. Significantly, though, they might also have a clearer understanding of the difference between the strategic and the tactical.

It was stated above that museums are not using their websites for strategic aims, such as audience development, creating brand awareness or building brand equity, to any great extent. They are more likely to be using them tactically. This also relates to the discussion on the tactical and strategic uses of integrated approach to marketing set out previously. The tactical concerns planning and implementation of individual campaigns,

and the strategic relates to brand positioning strategy (Reid et al., 2005). In relation to how museums might use their website the distinction could be between a product view and a marketing orientation (Rentschler & Geursen, 2003). As presented in Chapter 3, this distinction is seen in museums generally, with orientation moving from basic (product) to strategic (market), with the museums the most successful in attracting large audiences having a strategic orientation (Smithsonian Institution, 2002a). With websites, the tactical or basic approach has content mainly relating to opening times, exhibition information, research output and corporate communication or governance information. The question is whether the website is used strategically, as part of a suite of integrated marketing activities, or to simply provide information, with it being what textbooks call 'brochureware' (Strauss et al., 2006; Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007). As noted above, tactical uses of a website still have a marketing value, but not at the strategic level.

However, a pertinent question is what the expectations of visitors to museum websites are. The issue of whether they think that museums will have an online exhibition is relevant. One early study did show that information on the museum collection was expected by 40% of visitors to museum websites (Sarraf, 1999). But significantly, that study also indicated that just over 30% of visitors to museum websites expected a brochure, which could reflect the understanding by the visitor that a museum website will be used to advertise—an overt marketing communication tool—the museum and its collections (Sarraf, 1999: 238). Another later survey supported this idea, with 68% of respondents who visited a museum website looking for information on recent exhibits and 60% seeking information on special events (Kravchyna & Hastings, 2002).

Interestingly, Internet exhibitions are not seen by the general public as a substitute for the actual visiting experience (Lynch et al., 2000). This is despite the fact that the media sometimes proudly announce that museums' or archives' collections are now available "in all their electronic glory" (McNicol, 2006: 6).

Nonetheless, the idea of the virtual visitor is one that is attracting attention from museum researchers. Linked to the concept of Web 2.0, the virtual visitor is not simply a visitor to an online exhibition. The basis is that a museum website can be a destination

in its own right, but does not need to be a ‘virtual museum’ with ‘virtual exhibits’. Rather, the website is strategically used to attract the visitor with which museums seek to establish a relationship, but a relationship that does not necessarily involve a physical visit. Virtual visitors could be offered interactivity: a blog where they could seek advice from an expert in a particular field, for example. The relationship is, then, based on an integrated and strategic use of electronic marketing. Bartak (2007) considers that such strategies should be a priority for museums:

There is an urgent need for museums to develop an holistic and integrated approach to on-line marketing activities in order to generate maximum exposure, engagement and value for their constituents, even if they never visit (2007: 33).

Certainly, in the for profit sector Tiago, Couto, Natario and Braga (2007) have demonstrated that firms that invest in an integrated perspective in relation to their use of electronic marketing are more successful. On the whole, though, museums at present are more concerned with those visitors that do attend the physical site, and then how to use the right marketing tool to attract each audience segment. Electronic marketing via a website is one way that appears to be increasingly popular with museums in that respect, even if only at a tactical level. However, Liew and Lee (2007) have issued a note of caution, pointing out that electronic marketing strategies must complement the more traditional strategies in relation to community engagement, brand building strategies and corporate communications. In other words, museums should follow an integrated marketing approach when they incorporate electronic media into the overall marketing strategies. Such an approach has been shown to be advantageous in the for profit sector (Brodie et al., 2007; Sultan & Rohm, 2004). Similarly, museums need to send out a consistent message regarding their product, their role in society, and their brand, if they are to appeal to the modern and ever-changing museum visitor.

Conclusion

This chapter examined a number of marketing theories and concepts and sought to place them in the context of current museum practice. The aim of this approach was firstly to shed some light on the developments within the marketing discipline that have seen the

rise of electronic marketing as a concept, and secondly to provide insight into how this phenomenon has affected the use of electronic media in the museum sector. Initially this chapter discussed the development of an integrated marketing communication approach, specifically the approach known as IMC. It was seen that despite the academic disagreement centred around this approach, it has utility in practice, and can also provide a framework within which this thesis can view electronic marketing as a marketing communication tool in the museum sector. This framework was made up of three areas that were discussed in relation to museums in turn: communicating to museums' publics—linking clearly to issues introduced in Chapters 3 and 4 regarding museums' need to recognise, and communicate to, their multiple publics; integrating communication tools in the museum sector—linking to the use of an integrated approach to marketing to reinforce effective communication processes; and brand and branding museums—linking to issues that are central to the formation of brand awareness and a positive brand image. This last area was discussed in some detail, and though museums have been slow to recognise the utility of branding, it was shown that there is now growing support for the concept in the sector which has begun to influence marketing strategies.

A similar approach was adopted in the discussion of electronic marketing. That is, electronic marketing was considered in respect of its position within the marketing discipline, and then placed in a museum context. This approach was taken because there are issues of definition that need clarification: there is confusion as regards the use of the term Internet and electronic. This chapter set out the view taken in this thesis that 'electronic' covers a range of media, and not just the Internet, and as such is the most appropriate descriptor to use. This clarification is important given the increasing range of channels and media types available. Also important was the need to provide a brief overview of Internet use in Australia. Given the significance of Internet use generally, and its place as a channel for the delivery of services, there is ample justification for museums to use electronic marketing strategies. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis so far, the need to deliver experiences that meet customer's expectations is one of the changes seen in the museums' external environment.

The concluding section of this chapter, then, used the preceding theoretical discussions as a basis for assessing how museums use electronic media. It aimed to build on the discussion of integrated marketing and electronic marketing and evaluate current museum Internet activities as evidenced in the literature on museum practice. Overall, it appears that museums are not using their websites for strategic objectives, but are more likely to be using them tactically. However, the general increase in awareness of the strategic aspects of marketing has carried over into electronic marketing. So, while museums do not use their websites at present for strategic initiatives such as audience development or building brand equity, there is change underway. For example, the idea of the virtual visitor and the concept of Web 2.0 are now becoming part of museum discourse. For museums, this represents a move to a strategic approach to both marketing generally, and electronic marketing specifically.